

ABANDONMENT OR REMOVAL OF UNDERGROUND TANKS

Care is required not only in the handling and use of flammable or combustible liquids, but also in abandoning tanks that have held flammable or combustible liquids. This is particularly true of underground service station tanks are most frequently used for the storage of the motor fuel and occasionally for the storage of other flammable or combustible liquids, such as crankcase drainings (which may contain some gasoline). Through carelessness, explosions have occurred because flammable or combustible liquid tanks had not been properly conditioned before being abandoned.

In order to prevent accidents caused by improper conditioning, the procedures outlined below shall be followed when underground tanks are removed, abandoned, or temporarily taken out of service.

Underground tanks taken out of service may be safeguarded or disposed of by any one of the three following means:

- (a) Placed in a temporarily out of service condition. Tanks should be rendered temporarily out of service only when it is planned that they will be returned to active service within a reasonable period or pending removal or abandonment within 90 days.
- (b) Abandoned in place, with proper safeguarding.
- (c) Removed.

All these methods require a demolition permit issued by the Fire Department.

In cases where tanks are either rendered temporarily out of service or permanently abandoned, records should be kept of tank size, location, date of abandonment, and method used for placing the abandoned tank in a safe condition.

Procedures for carrying out each of the above methods of disposing of underground tanks are described in the following sections. No cutting torch or other flame-or spark-producing equipment shall be used until the tank has been completely purged or otherwise rendered safe. In each case, the numbered steps given shall be carried out successively.

Rendering Tanks “Temporarily Out of Service”

- (1) Cap or plug all lines such as fill line, gage opening, pump suction, and vapor return. Secure against tampering.
- (2) Disconnect piping at all tank openings.
- (3) Call for inspection.

Abandoning Underground Tanks in Place

- (1) Remove all flammable or combustible liquid from the tank and from all connecting lines. Call for inspection.
- (2) Disconnect the suction, inlet, gage, and vent lines.
- (3) Fill the tank completely with an inert solid material. Cap remaining underground piping. Call for inspection.

Removal of Underground Tanks

- (1) Remove all flammable or combustible liquids from tank and from connecting lines. Call for inspection.
- (2) Disconnect piping at all tank openings. Remove section of connecting lines that are not to be used further and cap or plug all tank openings. After removal, the tank may be gas freed on the premises if it can be done safely at the location or may be transported to an area not accessible to the public and the gas freeing completed at the location.
- (3) Call for inspection. Before any tank is removed from the site a fire prevention inspector must approve its relocation.

Disposal of Tanks

If a tank is to be disposed of as junk, it should be retested for flammable vapors and, if necessary, rendered gas-free. After junking and before releasing to junk dealer, a sufficient number of holes or openings should be made in it to render it unfit for further use. NFPA 327, Standard Procedures for Cleaning or Safeguarding Small Tanks and Containers, provides information on safe procedures for such operations.